

Message Text

SECRET

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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7749

S E C R E T FREETOWN 1684

EO 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: MPOL, CU, UR, SL

SUBJ: SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA

REF: STATE 134913

1. GOSL VIEWS BOTH SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLES AS BEING PERIPHERAL TO DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF AFRICA, BUT ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS. GOSL IS APPREHENSIVE ABOUT PROMINENT RUSSIAN AND CUBAN ROLES IN HORN OF AFRICA BUT SINCE CUBAN ADVISORS ARE TRAINING INTERNAL SECURITY UNITS (ISU), WHICH PROVIDES BACKBONE OF GOSL SECURITY FORCES, AND SOVIETS ARE SUPPLYING ARMS AND EQUIPMENT TO ISU, GOSL UNLIKELY TO VOICE THESE APPREHENSIONS OPENLY. GOSL BELIEVES THREAT OF CUBAN AND SOVIET INTERVENTION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE SUCCESSFUL SOLUTION THESE PROBLEMS.

2. IF FRONT LINE STATES SUCH AS ZAMBIA WERE TO INVITE CUBAN FORCES TO "PROTECT FRONTIERS" WE BELIEVE GOSL WOULD SUPPORT STRONGLY SUCH REQUESTS AND REBUT WESTERN CRITICISM AS INTER-FERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. GOSL WOULD BE MUCH MORE ALARMED IF CUBANS WERE TO START TAKING SIDES IN INTERNAL CONFLICTS SUCH AS ERITREA. GOSL DEBATED AT SOME LENGTH BEFORE SUPPORTING MPLA AND THEN REACHED DECISION ONLY AFTER MPLA WAS JUDGED TO BE LIKELY WINNER.

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3. RIGHTLY OR WRONG, GOSL BELIEVES CUBANS WILL LEAVE SIERRA LEONE AND OTHER COUNTRIES IF INVITED TO LEAVE. IT DOES NOT PERCEIVE CUBA TO BE COLONIAL POWER, NOR DOES IT JUDGE CUBA TO BE "PAWN" OF SOVIETS. ONLY INTERNAL PROBLEM GOSL FACES IS NEED TO KEEP CUBAN PRESENCE OUT OF PUBLIC SIGHT. ACCORDING TO LOCAL SOURCES THERE HAVE BEEN CLASHES BETWEEN CUBANS AND

SIERRA LEONEANS IN BARS AND OTHER SUCH PLACES.

4. WE BELIEVE GOSL RECOGNIZES SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE AS A
POTENTIALLY DEVISIVE ISSUE AMONG AFRICAN STATES. THIS
IN ITSELF WOULD NOT ALTER GOSL ATTITUDES REGARDING THIS ROLE.
WE BELIEVE ONLY THREAT OF COUNTER-INTERVENTION BY WESTERN OR
WESTERN-BACKED MILITARY FORCES WOULD CAUSE GOSL TO RE-EXAMINE
ITS PERCEPTIONS. IN INTERIM GOSL CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE
TO PLAY LOW KEYED, PRAGMATIC ROLE OF SEEKING TO OBTAIN MAXIMUM
ASSISTANCE FROM ALL AND ANY SOURCES.
NORTH

SECRET

NNN

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